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Truman's Message of 17 March

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INTRODUCTION: Although in effect competing for world radio attention with such subsequent events as the Anglo-U.S.-French proposal to return Trieste to Italy, the President's message continues to be accorded a considerable volume of foreign radio comment. This is especially true for broadcasts from Moscow (which in typical delayed fashion is just now getting into its stride) and from Moscow's satellites. "Warmongering," "war hysteria," "war scare," "war clamor," "oil on the fire of militarism," "preparing for a new military adventure," "the warmongers are spitting fire," "to create a war psychosis"--such are the phrases used by Moscow in discussions of the message. And some of the broadcasts from Moscow's satellites are even stronger. The Budapest radio, for example, transmits an article in which the Bulgarian Premier Dimitrov said that "Truman's speech amounted to an act of instigation for war." As to the favorable comment which generally characterized broadcasts from radios outside of the Soviet sphere, there is still a tendency on the part of some to equate the President's proposals with American public opinion in general. And although the gravity of the situation is not discounted, there is "belief that Moscow will understand the lesson of the 17th of March" if for no other reason than that the USSR is not prepared for war.

MOSCOW AND SATELLITES: At least 4 different Soviet commentators devote broadcasts to castigations and/or refutations of Truman's message. (Moscow also distributes a longish paraphrase of Henry Wallace's radio talk on the subject, as does TANJUG, the Yugoslav press

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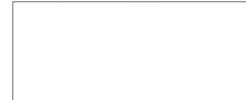
service.) In addition to hurling "warmongering" epithets, these commentaries make much of the "yearly decreases" in the USSR's budgetary "defense estimates" and of her recent "demobilization decree" which "testify to the peaceful intentions of the Soviet Union." These, in turn, are contrasted with Truman's "warmongering" proposals and with American defense expenditures--evidence which allegedly makes it obvious "that the whole threat to peace comes from the actions of the American warmongers," from "the American expansionists with their dreams of world domination." Moscow also reports the opinion of "certain Republicans" to the effect that Truman attempted "to create a crisis" to buttress his wavering political strength.

Moscow's satellite radios follow an almost identical, although more vitriolic, line of attack. In the above-quoted Dimitrov article, broadcast by the Budapest radio, the "democratic peoples of the world" are urged to "consolidate their democratic regimes so they can reject with even greater assurance any attempts at a war of nerves, intimidation, blackmail, or similar methods reminiscent of Hitler's tactics." The Hungarian Communist SZEAD MRP, while charging that the President's message "amounts to a disturbance of world peace," feels that "at the same time it would be a mistake and would facilitate the execution of the imperialist plans if we believed that the Trumans are ready and strong enough for war. No! ... Without under-rating the economic and military strength of U.S. Imperialism, one can and must state that the policy of the present ruling circles in America is dictated at least as much by weakness as by strength." (Hungarian Home Service, 19 March 1948) Although this is the most outspoken reference to the issue of war-strength, other satellite radio broadcasts verge on the subject in posing the unity of the "new democracies," under the leadership of the USSR, against the burgeoning American "imperialism"; in this context, however, the consistently "peaceful" motives and intentions of the USSR and its satellites are stressed.

It is noteworthy that monitored broadcasts from the Czechoslovak radio continue to slight the President's message. Finnish press reactions, according to the Finnish radio, includes the belief "that the U.S. foreign policy has now entered a new phase" (HELSINKI SANOMAT, independent liberal); the charge that the original Truman Doctrine, together with subsequent American "aggressive" actions, "was the real starting shot for the recent

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sharpening of international reactions," and the prediction the "western bloc system organized by U.S. imperialism" will be just as artificial and transitory as "Hitlerite Europe" (VAPAA SUJA, Far Left Democrat); the observation that "Truman's speech has widened the gap (between) the East and West" (IAAKAUSA, Agrarian); and the conclusion "that the U.S. armed forces will support the preservation of the present political position throughout Europe" (UUSI SUOLI, Conservative). Broadcasts from both Italy and Moscow report that speakers of the Italian "People's Democratic Front" continue to "criticize Truman for creating an atmosphere that might lead to another world war" (Scoccimarro), and to "reject the unasked for interference of Truman... (who) is attempting to ignore the mighty democratic fervor of the Italian people" (AVANTI).

FAVORABLE COMMENT: Most comment in broadcasts from radios outside the Soviet sphere adds little new to the original applause immediately following the message. Truman's unambiguous decisiveness is hailed as epoch-making both for peace and democracy and for prevention of further Soviet expansion. In only one monitored broadcast over the weekend, from Ankara, is reference made to the urgent necessity of immediate Congressional action on Truman's proposals. Considering the Kremlin's reaction to the message, it is generally felt that the USSR cannot afford "to go as far as an armed conflict." An interesting Italian anti-Communist use of the message is indicated in a reported speech by Perrone-Capano, Undersecretary for Education: "Truman's speech... revealed the relations between the Italian elections and the international situation. Truman said... that Italy should not fall into the mouth of the giant; and that if Russia tries this, there will be war."

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